

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Vera Down 2026



The terms and conditions for the Vera Down grant ('the grant') are set out below. It is important that these terms and conditions are read prior to completing the online application, and in the case that an application is successful, in conjunction with the award letter. Failure to comply with these terms and conditions may lead to the termination of the grant and the BMA Foundation reserves the right to recover grant monies in part or in full.

General

1. The BMA Foundation is offering the Vera Down grant (£65,000) to assist research into neurological disorders.

2. In delivering our vision, the BMA Foundation encourages applications from individuals who are developing their research careers or taking the first steps toward becoming independent researchers. BMA Foundation grants are designed to empower and support early-stage researchers, including doctors and scientists, in achieving their research goals and driving innovation in medical research.

At the time of application, we expect applicants to have no more than five years of postdoctoral research experience in their proposed field of study.

We also welcome applications from those who have spent time away from research, such as during a career break, parental leave, long-term sick leave, or significant periods dedicated to clinical training. These factors will be taken into consideration when reviewing your application.

3. Applicants must be registered medical practitioners in the UK and members of the BMA.

4. Grant holders are required to hold BMA membership for the duration of the grant.

5. In the case of joint applications, **both applicants** must be members of the BMA. All application criteria apply fully to both applicants.

6. Applications for the above grant should be for proposed or current work on a specific project relating to neurological disorders.

7. This grant is **not available** for funding:

- undergraduate education
- postgraduate education involving 'taught' programmes (eg Masters courses)
- overseas education or training
- solely for travel or accommodation expenses
- the purchase of computer hardware
- conference fees or travel
- solely publication fees.

8. The grant will only fund the direct research costs of the research project. It will not cover any overheads, estates costs or indirect costs.

9. Applicants may only request open access publication fees for **one publication**.

10. Applicants may apply for any amount up to, but not exceeding, the total amount available from the grant (£65,000). **Applicants are also requested to indicate a minimum acceptable level of funding**, which will be taken into account if a decision is made to split the grant money between two or more projects.

11. The grant may be held concurrently with another grant and is renewable. An application for renewal will be considered in competition with other applications.
12. Applicants may only submit one application to the 2026 Vera Down grant, including joint applications.
13. Applicants are permitted to apply to other BMA Foundation grants.
14. Applicants will be notified of the outcome by mid-July. Funding will be available to start from 1 September 2026 and the total grant amount will be available over a period of three years.
15. Research applications and related correspondence is strictly confidential between the applicant and the BMA Foundation and must not be disclosed outwith of those involved in the application process without prior permission from the BMA Foundation trustees.
16. The decision of the BMA Foundation trustees as to the winner of the grant is final and no further correspondence will be entered into. If none of the applications are considered to be of sufficient merit, the grant will not be awarded.

Pre-awarding conditions

17. Applicants must have obtained, or applied for, approval for their research project from their local Research Ethics Committee, where appropriate. A signed PDF copy of this agreement must be uploaded during the online application process, or alternatively if ethical approval is pending then the date on which the committee will meet must be provided. For projects *not* requiring ethical approval, a signed statement from the project supervisor/head of department, giving the reason why ethical approval is not considered necessary, must be uploaded (PDF format) during the online application process. If the Research Ethics Committee will not be able to accept applications for ethical review unless funding has been agreed, a signed statement to this effect must be uploaded (PDF format) during the online application process. **Ethical approval must be valid for the duration of the project. Approval must relate to the project specified in the application and be relevant to the persons conducting the proposed research.**
18. Applicants are not required to be engaged in full-time research work. Applicants must however (as part of the application process) **upload a signed letter (PDF format) on headed paper from their organisation (eg NHS Trust, University) for where the research will be undertaken, clearly stating that they have permission to carry out the proposed research.** If research is conducted in multiple settings, a letter of permission is required from each organisation from where research is being undertaken.
19. **All research involving the collaboration of the NHS or social care services is required to have an identified sponsor for research governance purposes.** (The research sponsor is the organisation taking primary responsibility for ensuring that the study meets national standards for the conduct of research, as set out in the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research).

Applicants' attention is drawn particularly to the specific responsibilities of the research sponsor, the principal investigator, and the host organisation for the research, defined in detail within the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research.

Please note that the BMA Foundation is not in a position to act as the research sponsor for those projects for which it awards research grants.

The framework can be found on the Department of Health and Social Care website at:

<https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/policies-standards-legislation/uk-policy-framework-health-social-care-research>.

20. Applicants are required to upload (PDF format) two references during the online application process. Please note each reference **MUST bear the electronic (scanned) signature of the referee and be submitted on**

headed paper. For joint applications, **each applicant** must submit two references (the same referee can provide individual references for both applicants).

21. For joint applications, correspondence (addressed to both applicants) will only be sent to the preferred mailing address.

Animal research

22. All experimental programmes supported by the BMA Foundation must only use animals where there are no alternatives. The project must not involve the use of the forced swim test. If it does, the applicant will be asked to remove this, or the application will be rejected.

Experiments using animals funded by the BMA Foundation must:

- use the simplest possible, or least sentient, species of animal
- ensure that distress and suffering are avoided wherever possible
- employ an appropriate design and use the minimum number of animals consistent with ensuring that the scientific objectives will be met

See the NC3Rs website for further information and guidance (www.nc3rs.org.uk).

23. All grant holders using animals must implement the principles in the cross-funder guidance Responsibility in the Use of Animals in Bioscience Research (www.nc3rs.org.uk/responsibility).

24. Grant holders using non-human primates must comply with the NC3Rs guidelines Primate Accommodation, Care and Use (www.nc3rs.org.uk/primatesguidelines).

25. Grant holders should make use of the ARRIVE guidelines (www.nc3rs.org.uk/ARRIVE) when designing their experiments, and ensure that they report animal-based studies in accordance with the ARRIVE guidelines as far as possible, taking into account the specific editorial policies of the journal concerned.

Post-awarding conditions

26. It is the responsibility of the grant holder, the project supervisor and the host organisation to ensure that the research is organised and carried out within a framework of best practice. The grant holder must ensure that, before the research commences and during the full period of the grant, all the necessary legal and regulatory requirements in order to conduct the research are met, and all the necessary licences and approvals have been obtained. The grant holder will indemnify the BMA Foundation against any liability incurred by it howsoever arising from the breach by the grant holder of this in clause 20.

27. The details of the application cannot be changed once the grant has been awarded.

28. It is expected that the grant winner will attend the BMA Foundation Awards Ceremony at BMA House on Thursday 29 October 2026.

29. The grant holder must submit an interim progress report of approximately 500 words on the work undertaken **no later than one year after receipt of the grant**.

30. The grant holder must submit a final report of a minimum of 1,500 words on completion of the work, **no later than six months following the end of the three-year grant period**. Where a final report is not submitted in this specified time, any remaining money under the grant will not be awarded.

31. The grant holder is required to submit invoices covering services or materials provided for the purpose of the research. All invoices **MUST be accompanied by copies of receipts for which reimbursement is sought (except when claiming salaries)**. Amounts in excess of half the total value of the grant will only be authorised following receipt of the interim report. Payment of the final quarter of the total grant money will only be authorised following receipt of the final report.

32. In any work published as a result of the grant, due acknowledgement must be made to the BMA

Foundation Vera Down grant, and copies of the publications sent to BMA people and corporate development directorate, which has accountability for charitable activities at the BMA. In any acknowledgement of support for published reports (excluding research papers), a disclaimer must be added to the effect that the report does not necessarily reflect the views of the BMA Foundation.

33. The grant holder must liaise with and obtain prior approval from the BMA press office before any press statements are issued with regard to the grant and/or the findings from the research project funded by the grant.

Limitation of liability

34. The BMA Foundation accepts no responsibility for any costs or liabilities arising from the research funded by the grant. The grant holder will indemnify the BMA Foundation against any claims for compensation or against any other claims (whether under any statute or regulation or at common law) for which any host organisation may be liable as an employer or otherwise or for which the grant holder or any other person may be liable.

Variation and termination

35. The BMA Foundation reserves the right to amend these terms and conditions, as well as the grant criteria for each grant and any terms and conditions contained in the award letter. Any changes to these terms and conditions will be posted on the BMA Foundation's website.

36. The BMA Foundation reserves the right to terminate or suspend the grant, with immediate effect once notice has been given.

37. The grant holder must inform the BMA Foundation as soon as possible of any change in status which might affect their ability to comply with these terms and conditions.

Data protection

38. The BMA Foundation will use information provided in the application for the processing and the assessment of the application, for awarding the grant and for the financial payment and monitoring of the grant. The name of the successful applicant and their research project title will be made available on the BMA Foundation website following the awarding of the grants, as well as the details of any published work resulting from the research project.

Law

39. The laws of England and Wales shall govern these terms and conditions and all matters relating to these terms and conditions shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of England and Wales.

Applications that do not comply with all of the above terms and conditions will be rejected without exception.

For more information please contact:

People and Corporate Development Directorate, British Medical Association, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9JP

Tel: 020 7383 6341 (direct line) E-mail: researchgrants@bma.org.uk

Closing date for receipt of completed applications is Friday 6 March 2026.